

issues of economy, education, healthcare, and environment must be addressed.

Currently we are in debt to China for over \$15 trillion; this means our population of roughly 311 million citizens has a debt share of around \$49 thousand each. East Asian countries and European countries surpass us in education—especially in the academic subjects of math and science. Japan has a universal health care system and an average population life expectancy of 82.25. Germany understands that our environment has a finite supply of resources and imposes an environmental tax on its citizens.

Focusing on the economy, we need to generate more jobs and discontinue outsourcing. It is time for heavy regulation, and an end to the laissez-faire relationship with big businesses. This is evident in the Wall Street bailout, the outraged 99 percent, and the unacceptable (though declining) unemployment rate of 8.5 percent. The warfare against the middle classes must be addressed, and the lower classes must be bolstered.

Education is success. The focus of education should be aimed at life achievement rather than standardized tests. The problem now is that schools don't have a large enough budget: if teachers had larger salaries more competition would be created and our children would be taught by the best qualified. Parents, when they motivate and assist their children, can become invaluable components in this exciting process.

Our healthcare system is a painful topic. America has the most expensive healthcare system without the better results of less expensive European systems. We should follow the European models. Well, at least all children, seniors, and disabled should have assured healthcare. Vermont is an innovator in healthcare, and if we are successful the rest of America might follow our example.

The environmental issue is not to be taken lightly. Global warming is real and we perpetuate the harm caused to our planet. It is our responsibility to work with other powerful countries to limit our ecological footprints and conserve the world's natural resources. Steps must be taken not only on a political level but on a cultural one as well. It must become part of our culture to consume less extravagantly and recycle more diligently.

To make these ideals a reality our government must find harmony between the Democrats and the Republicans. We need to remember that this is not an issue of which party is most correct, but what can be compromised to create a better America. We still haven't seen all America can be, she is still growing and we, the present and the future, must guide her to the best outcome.

KIDDER SPILLANE, CVU, (HONORABLE MENTION)

[January 23, 2012]

Dear Fellow Americans, I am reporting to you as the New Year is starting I would like to inform the state in which the country is in and in which subjects we are going to push our efforts toward.

I believe the most important subject to address first is our problem with oil. We depend a lot on Middle Eastern countries for their foreign oil. The oil is running out and we need to put a lot of our efforts into alternative energy sources including solar, wind and even hydroelectricity. We can't just make this happen overnight it's going to take a lot of time and effort; this can be looked upon as a positive. This brings me to my next subject, if we create more alternative energy productions this will open a lot more opportunities for job creation. In November of 2011 the unemployment rate dropped to 8.4 percent from 9 percent. There

are still over 13 million American without a job, and these alternative energy products can reduce that number significantly.

The next subject I would like to address is healthcare. Healthcare is a necessity that I feel every American should be able to have with no cost. Healthcare shouldn't be something people have to worry about, our country should provide universal healthcare across the nation it is our right to get the treatment they need to survive.

The country is in debt, that's the truth we are in a deficit of \$1.48 trillion. This is a cause of overspending by the U.S. simply just raising the taxes for everyone is not the answer. I believe the way people should be taxed is the answer if a wealthier individual has the money to be able to pay more in taxes than he is doing than he should be paying more than somebody who is working a middle class job living in the suburbs. There needs to be a higher minimum tax payment on the less wealthy citizens. Not just a low percentage of somebody's income.

I also believe we need to support student loan reforms. In the future almost 60 percent of future jobs will require more than a high school diploma. We want every American to have the opportunity, and the ability to get a college diploma. People shouldn't have to be in so much debt from their loans. We need to help the people that aren't able to pay for college by themselves. The interest rate on student loans will be lowered.

Thank you fellow Americans. It is not just congresses job to make this happen we need to unite as a nation everybody needs to be a part of the action of strengthening our nation. This is a tough time right now with the economy it's going to take effort from all Americans. Thank you for your time America. God bless you and may god bless the United States of America.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

At 2:02 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bills:

H.R. 3800. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the funding and expenditure authority of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, to amend title 49, United States Code, to extend authorizations for the airport improvement program, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3801. An act to amend the Tariff Act of 1930 to clarify the definition of aircraft and the offenses penalized under the aviation smuggling provisions under that Act, and for other purposes.

The enrolled bills were subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. INOUE).

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bill was read the first time:

S. 2041. A bill to approve the Keystone XL pipeline project and provide for environmental protection and government oversight.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-4678. A communication from the Chairman, National Transportation Safety Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Board's competitive sourcing efforts for fiscal year 2011; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4679. A communication from the Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the National 911 Program; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4680. A communication from the Secretary of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the awarding of funding made available by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4681. A communication from the Administrator, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "NASA: Key Controls NASA Employs to Guide Use and Management of Funded Space Act Agreements are Generally Sufficient, but Some Could Be Strengthened and Clarified"; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4682. A communication from the Acting Secretary of the Federal Trade Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Do-Not-Call Registry Fee Extension Act of 2007; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4683. A communication from the Director, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Direct Investment Surveys: BE-12, Benchmark Survey of Foreign Direct Investment in the United States—2012" (RIN0691-AA80) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 6, 2012; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4684. A communication from the Assistant Chief Counsel for Hazardous Materials Safety, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Hazardous Materials: Miscellaneous Amendments; Response to Appeals; Corrections" (RIN2137-AE84) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on December 30, 2011; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4685. A communication from the Regulatory Ombudsman, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Hours of Service of Drivers" (RIN2126-AB26) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 13, 2012; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4686. A communication from the Deputy Bureau Chief, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "911 Service, Phase II Accuracy" (FCC 11-107) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 13, 2012; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-4687. A communication from the Chief of Staff, Media Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amendment of Section 73.202(b), Table of Allotments, FM Broadcast Stations (Milford, Utah)" (MB Docket No. 11-64, RM-11598) received during adjournment of the Senate in